THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

December/January 2017-18 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Years ago, a guest joined Claire, Carl Siciliano, and me for Evening Prayer at Saint Benedict's Catholic Worker in Washington, DC, but announced beforehand that he would only say "the short form" of the Lord's Prayer. I assumed he meant that he would omit the ending "For thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory...", but that wasn't the case. He wouldn't say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," because he had to be honest that he was not forgiving and didn't want to challenge God to condemn him for it. As a person of integrity, he refused to just mouth the words, and, in doing so, he challenged me to think hard about those words and my own commitment to forgiveness. I could picture myself at the pearly gates with Saint Peter holding a long list of instances in which I was vengeful, alongside an even longer list of my having told God, via the Lord's Prayer, to only give me as much mercy as I gave others. Yikes!

Indeed, at the Catholic Mass, the celebrant invites the congregation to pray the Lord's Prayer with the words, "At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, we *dare* to say...." Of course one might be given some slack for failing to live any ideal out of forgetfulness, weakness, fear, and any other human imperfection. Like coaches in youth soccer, I believe God gives out trophies for honest effort. Dorothy Day said, "God understands us when we try to love." But what is hard to excuse is the conscious decision to contradict a teaching we claim to profess.

The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, used an analogy of a child being told to go to bed by his father. After receiving this clear instruction, the boy rationalizes that what the father really intends is for the child to be happy, and therefore not going to bed is more consistent with that goal. Such convoluted thinking, Bonhoeffer says, is never accepted by a parent or by God. Instead, Bonhoeffer calls for "single-minded obedience," taking Christ at His word and refusing to turn His teaching on its head. (Sad to say, Bonhoeffer would later join military and political leaders in a failed plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler.)

The most glaring example of the

(Continued on Page 2)

Why Church Shootings Don't Intimidate Christians

by Russell Moore

Editor's Note: The author is President of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He is the author of Onward: Engaging the Culture Without Losing the Gospel. *This article first appeared in 11/7/17* Washington Post.

While millions of other Christians were singing hymns or opening their Bibles or taking communion this past Sunday, at that very moment, a gunman was opening fire on the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas. This, believed to be the largest church shooting in US history, ended with at least 26 people killed, according to authorities.

Several children were among the fallen, including pastor Frank Pomeroy's 14-year-old daughter Annabelle. Whatever the shooter's twisted objective might have been, we do know this: It won't work.

The goal the gunman sought, to terrorize worshipers, has been attempted constantly over the centuries around the world by cold, rational governments and terrorist groups — all thinking that they could, by the trauma of violence, snuff out churches, or at least intimidate those churches into hiding from one another. Such violent tactics always end up with the exact opposite of what the intimidators intend: a resilient church that, if anything, moves forward with even more purpose than before. Why?

(Continued on Page 4)

Integrity

(Continued from Page 1)

perversion of the Gospel would have to be arguing that the Prince of Peace is really a champion of war. It took gyrations involving pagan philosophy by saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas to come up with the Just War Theory, under which banner Christians have slaughtered hundreds of millions, including women and children. So far from Christ's teaching did Christians stray that the Jesuit theologian, Tielhard de Chardin, as a Catholic chaplain in World War I, was able to describe "going over the top" in trench warfare as a form of loving the enemy.

The bastardization of Christian values didn't stop with war though; it extended deeply into economics. On October 29 the first reading at Mass was from Exodus 22 and said, "...**If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him.**" This is only one of many biblical prohibitions against the charging and receiving of interest. For centuries, Christians paid lip service to this, but, eventually, got around to arguing for modest interest and then opened the flood gates to whatever the market would bear. Years ago, the Catholic Diocese of Worcester proposed collecting money to be invested at interest and then using the proceeds to fund services. They called the scheme "Forward in Faith," but it seemed much closer to "God is Dead" to me. So deep has a culture of usury pervaded the Church that many diocese even charge their own parishes interest on loans.

Christians are not alone in turning their values inside out. On Halloween, after killing eight people on a bike path in New York City, a Muslim shouted,

Pablo Picasso

"God is great!" By what warped logic did he transform Allah "the merciful and compassionate" into a blood-thirsty fiend?

In Andre Schwarz-Bart's masterpiece, *The Last of the Just*, Ernie Levy, the Jewish main character, hears the Gospel read at Mass for the first time, and, astonished by Jesus' nonviolence, says, "Christians say they love Jesus, but I think they hate him without knowing it. So they take the cross by the other end and make a sword out of it and strike us with it!"

Cornell West joined a number of other ministers in an attempt to nonviolently block white supremacists from marching in Charlottesville, Virginia. After being cornered by the angry mob, armed anti-racists intervened on his and the other ministers' behalf. He later told the media that these men with guns had saved their lives. When asked if this did not contradict his values, the self-proclaimed peace activist told the press, "I'm a Christian, but not a pacifist." Just what exactly did Reverend West think Jesus, who went to His death forgiving His persecutors, meant when He commanded us: **"Love one another as I have loved you"**?

But enough finger pointing. We all need integrity. When I find myself avoiding eye contact with panhandlers or begrudgingly giving them a measly dollar when I have fives and tens in my pocket, I think of people like Theresa Fahlback. She gave a thousand dollars to our community after we were burned out by a fire. I assumed she was wealthy, but later learned that, in fact, she was not at all. She gave out of her want, not her excess. Christ reminds us over and over that everything we have is a gift to be shared, that we needn't fear for our own needs, and that we will receive the same mercy we give others. I need to continuously remind myself that the Gospel is not some guilty playbook, but actual good news, a recipe for joy.

Kurt Vonnegut, a secular Jew and atheist, was nevertheless always moved by the unadulterated message of Jesus. In the climax of his novel *Jailbird*, as the main character, Walter F. Starbuck, is about to be sent to jail, he is asked why he distributed his entire fortune to the poor. Starbuck replies matter-of-factly, "Why? Because of the Sermon on the Mount, Sir."

While none of us will always live up to our ideals, let us humbly acknowledge our failings and not make excuses for them. If we keep our eyes on the prize, we just might surprise God and ourselves at how often we can act with genuine integrity. With practice, we can do so more often. And as Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote proclaimed, "The world will be better for this." Ω

Vol. 34, No. 3 **THE** **December/Janurary 2017-18**

CATHOLIC **RADICAL**

Published every two months by:
The Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker Community
52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610 Telephone: (508) 753-3588, 753-3089
Email:theresecw2@gmail.com

Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

More Than a Friend

Brian Peterson didn't know what he had in common with Matt Faris when he went out of his way to meet his Santa Ana, California neighbor.

Every day, Peterson would pass by Faris, who has been homeless for more than a decade. But it took some guts, Peterson admits, to finally walk up to him.

"It was like butterflies in my stomach," he says. "I introduced myself, and I think I apologized to you. I remember saying, "I'm sorry for like, driving by you a hundred times and never saying 'Hi,' 'cause you were always outside my building."

Faris remembers the encounter as a sincere one. "You asked me a lot of questions, like what I want to do with my life," he says. "Things that are important to a person."

He told Peterson he'd moved to California from Kentucky to be a musician, but that "some things didn't work out."

It was during that first conversation that they discovered they shared the pursuit of art. And Peterson, a car designer who hadn't picked up a paintbrush in eight years, found inspiration in Faris.

"Out of nowhere," Peterson says, "I just asked you, 'Can I paint your portrait?'"

Matt signed his portrait, painted by Brian Peterson, on August 24, 2015.

"You say you're not photogenic," Peterson tells Faris, "but I saw the man who moved from Kentucky, the guy who came out here to pursue a career in music. And I hadn't painted in eight years, but you were the first guy that captured my heart and gave me a subject to paint."

Brian Peterson and Matt Faris

When he asked Faris what he wanted to do with the proceeds from the painting, naturally, Peterson suggested some basics for the homeless man: hotel rooms, clothes, shoes. But, Faris says, "I didn't even have to think about it."

"Well, that sounds nice," he told Peterson, "but I want to record a CD."

And when Faris' answer didn't change, Peterson started looking up recording studios. "In that first recording session, I saw you on the piano, on the guitar, singing — and then I remember you got to the drums. And there was no drum set. We were like, 'Well, just use synthesized drums.'"

Faris swatted down that idea. "No way," he said.

"And I thought to myself, 'Man, how many areas in my own life have I just maybe gave in to settling for less?'" Peterson said. "And the fact that you wouldn't was a lesson that I've taken with me from that day."

Faris, who's still homeless, has finished recording an album. While he doesn't know how many ears it will reach, he's grateful for his unlikely friendship with Peterson.

"It's really helped me a lot to meet someone who's really stuck with me," he says. The feelings are mutual.

"I consider you more than a friend," Peterson tells Faris. "You've shown me things may not always be what they seem, and that there's a new way of looking at the world. And everyone deserves to be seen with eyes of love." Ω

Editor's Note: This interview was produced by Liyna Anwar for StoryCorps, *a national nonprofit that perserves in the Library of Congress conversations about people's lives. It was broadcast on November 3, 2017 by* National Public Radio *on* Morning Edition.

French Clowns Rally

On August 8, the eve of the 52nd anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Japan, fifteen clowns rallied at the headquarters of *La République en Marche,* the new political party of French President Macron. This was after France and the other nuclear states, Great Britain, China, Russia, the US, India, Pakistan, and Israel, refused to join the 122 countries which adopted the United Nations Treaty On the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The Clown Armies' Chief of Staff said, "We came to thank Macron because the war is a lot better than the Treaty!" Under a super-sized inflated bomb, the clowns celebrated "Jupiterian France" for opposing with all its might the introduction of the international treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

After a while, fifty men in blue forcibly expelled the clowns from the building and detained them, recording their identities before they were released. *Désobeir* organizer Remi Filliau was subsequently summoned to report to the police station. Ω

Aiden Duffy

Shootings Don't Intimidate

(Continued from Page 1)

Whether they are crazed loners in the United States or jihadist cells in Syria or governing councils in the old Soviet bloc, these forces fundamentally misunderstand the source of Christianity's strength in the first place. Killers assume, after all, that gunfire or poison gas or mass beheadings will show Christians how powerless we are. That is true. They assume that this sense of powerlessness will rob the community of its will to be the church. That is false.

If they looked overhead, in almost any of the churches they attempt to destroy, these killers might see what they miss: the cross.

The church was formed against the threat of terror. Jesus himself stood before a Roman governor who told him that the state had the authority to kill him, in the most horrific way possible — staking him to a crossbeam to bleed slowly to death before a jeering crowd. That's, of course, exactly what Pilate did— and the empire's intimidation seemed to work, at first.

Most of Jesus' core followers went into hiding, out of fear that they would be endangered next. That's exactly what crosses were designed to do: Their public display was to warn people that they could be the next in line.

The very ones who scattered, though, soon returned, testifying that they had seen the crucified Jesus alive. The result was an open proclamation of the Christian message that led to thousands joining themselves to the tiny persecuted movement. Within a matter of centuries, the terrorists themselves, the Roman Empire, would be gone, with the church marching forward into the future.

The reason was not that the church came to believe that they could find safety in the threats of violence. The reason was that the church came to conclude, in the midst of the violence, that death is not the endpoint.

Much of the New Testament is made up of letters from the apostles of Jesus on why the cross is, counterintuitively, the power of God. The Christian gospel does not cower before death. Those who give their lives in witness to Christ are not helpless victims, in our view. In fact, the Book of Revelation maintains that those who are martyred are in fact ruling with Christ. This is not in spite of the fact that they are killed. They triumph even as they are killed. That's because they are joined to a Christ who has been dead, and never will be again.

The day of the shooting was, for many churches, a day of remembrance for the persecuted church. Christians do not see as victims those around the world who are rooted out of their churches, even lined up and executed. We see in them the power Jesus promised us: the power that is made perfect in weakness.

Rick Beerhorst

To eradicate churches, our opponents will need a better strategy. They should see that Christianity can be easier suffocated with comfort, to the point that we forget who we are, than it can be terrorized with violence. Those who try to confront the church with the threat of death only remind the church that we were dead, and are now alive in Christ.

The days ahead will be awful for the grieving community of Sutherland Springs. But one thing is certain: Come Sunday, they will be gathered again, singing and praying and opening the Word. That church will bear witness to the truth that shaped them: Eternal life cannot be overcome by death. And over that church will be a cross. Ω

The phrase
"*do not be afraid*"
appears in the Bible
365 times

No One Is Evil

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

A supporter of President Trump, upset with our coverage of him, told me he was "wonderful" and his anti-fascist opponents were "evil." In bygone days, the divide might have been saints and sinners, as if saints *never* sinned and sinners *only* sinned. In any event, the dichotomy is not only un-Christian, it is not true.

All of us, left, right, center, religious, agnostic, atheist, not only make mistakes, but also commit deliberate immoral acts. All of us also do some good. The Bible is filled with flawed characters chosen by God to be prophets and saints. Apparently, God never gives up hope on us.

Society, in contrast, throws people into the wastebasket if they commit unpardonable offenses. Those accused of pedophilia, sexual assault, and now sexual harassment are banished from public life and demonized. Any good they ever did is negated. Their futures are so bleak some commit suicide.

An "off-with-their-heads" attitude is fueled by empathy for victims and an assumption that anything less perpetuates injustice, but is that really so? I have met veterans who acknowledged their part in appalling atrocities, did serious penance, and have gone on to become incredible peacemakers. They could never have done so if the peace movement presumed they were nothing but war criminals. Many Vets for Peace tell their stories to dissuade others from making similar mistakes. If Kevin Spacey or Bill Cosby got down on their knees to publicly beg forgiveness as Henry II did for the murder of Saint Thomas Becket, couldn't they eventually be forgiven? As Christ said, "**Let the one among you who is without sin cast the first stone.**"

Ironically, a zero forgiveness attitude promotes the kind of depersonalization that fuels rape, murder, and war. Without backing a millimeter away from condemning injustice and defending victims, we must never forget that all of us, Weinstein, Trump, Bill Clinton..., are God's children, and we don't have the right to cast anyone out of the family. Ω

Birthday

by Judith Felsen

Another chance to recommit to
loving more deeply
giving more generously
connecting more vigorously
growing more consciously
studying more effectively
acting more responsibly
praying more expansively
chanting more intimately
healing more extensively
being more expressively
living more joyously
...another chance to be
the spark meant to be. Ω

Noel

by Anne Porter

When snow is shaken
From the balsam trees
And they're cut down
And brought into our houses

When clustered sparks
Of many-colored fire
Appear at night
In ordinary windows

We hear and sing
The customary carols

They bring us ragged miracles
And hay and candles
And flowering weeds of poetry
That are loved all the more
Because they are so common

But there are carols
That carry phrases
Of the haunting music
Of the other world
A music wild and dangerous
As a prophet's message

Or the fresh truth of children
Who though they come to us
From our own bodies
Are altogether new
With their small limbs
And birdlike voices

They look at us
With their clear eyes
And ask the piercing questions
God alone can answer. Ω

Pope Calls Death Penalty "contrary to the Gospel"

by Cindy Wooden (for the Catholic New Agency)

The death penalty, no matter how it is carried out, "is, in itself, contrary to the Gospel," Pope Francis said.

Marking the 25th anniversary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* at the Vatican Oct. 11, Pope Francis said the catechism's discussion of the death penalty, already formally amended by St. John Paul II, needs to be even more explicitly against capital punishment.

Capital punishment, he said, "heavily wounds human dignity" and is an "inhuman measure."

"It is, in itself, contrary to the Gospel, because a decision is voluntarily made to suppress a human life, which is always sacred in the eyes of the Creator and of whom, in the last analysis, only God can be the true judge and guarantor," the pope said.

The death penalty, he said, not only extinguishes a human life, it extinguishes the possibility that the person, recognizing his or her errors, will request forgiveness and begin a new life.

The church's position on the death penalty, he said, is one example of how church teaching is not static, but grows and deepens along with a growth in faith and in response to modern questions and concerns.

In the past, when people did not see any other way for society to defend itself against serious crime and when "social maturity" was lacking, he said, people accepted the death penalty as "a logical consequence of the application of justice."

In fact, he said, the church itself believed that, and the death penalty was a possible punishment in the Papal States. It was only in 1969 that Pope Paul VI formally banned the death penalty, even though it had not been imposed since 1870.

"Let us take responsibility for the past and recognize" that use of the death penalty was "dictated by a mentality that was more legalistic than Christian," Pope Francis said. "Remaining neutral today when there is a new need to reaffirm personal dignity would make us even more guilty."

The first edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published by St. John Paul II in 1992, recognized "as well-founded the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty." At the same time, it said, "bloodless means" that could protect human life should be used when possible.

But the language was formally changed in 1997 after St. John Paul II issued his pro-life encyclical, "*Evangelium Vitae*." Since then, the catechism has specified that the use of the death penalty is permissible only when the identity and responsibility of the condemned is certain and when capital punishment "is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor."

The development of church teaching, Pope Francis insisted, is not the same as contradicting or changing church teaching. "Tradition is a living reality and only a partial vision would lead to thinking of 'the deposit of faith' as something static."

"The word of God," he said, "cannot be saved in mothballs as if it were an old blanket to protect against insects."

The Christian faith, he said, always has insisted on the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death. So, the church has a continuing obligation to speak out when it realizes something that was accepted in the past actually contradicts church teaching.

"Therefore, it is necessary to reiterate that, no matter how serious the crime committed, the death penalty is inadmissible, because it attacks the inviolability and dignity of the person," Pope Francis said. Ω

LETTERS

Hello There!!
Greetings again from the inside society in central California — the forgotten society! I hope and pray all is okay and your day is going well!

I see lots going on "outs"! Storms, earthquakes, fires, even shootings... Trump ready to go to war overseas. So, **what's next**?

...Putting the word out early this year with a please and a thank you in case anyone runs across any type of 2018 calendar.

Staples okay, just no wire! Mail room real picky here and doesn't allow padded/ bubble envelopes or mailing tubes.

Take care and enjoy your day!

Clifford Smith, T-94004
Avenal State Prison
C-330, 01-05 Low/PO Box 903
Avenal, California 93204

Dear Scott & Claire,
Jim Schutze's article on nonviolence and his interview with Rev. Peter Johnson was enlightening. This weekend we have the School of America's Watch "*Encuentro*" at the border in Nogales, Arizona. I am hoping that "our side" has a deep connection to nonviolence and love and respect for our enemy (opponent).

The movement to protest ROTC on Jesuit universities is a protest worthy of the Catholic Worker charism, but I would not call it Franciscan. Saint Francis made it clear that any of his followers of Christ should "not bear arms against anyone," but he was too humble to say "anyone" in the military (or police force) is not a Christian."

In other words, Francis' effort at rebuilding the church, was to do so by personal example. If a ROTC student would ask him if he should stay in the military, Francis would council him to leave, but Francis would not "protest" Christians in the military (or police).

I always enjoy seeing Peter Maurin's Easy Essays — and the "beggar" one is one of my favorites.

...Scott & Claire's daughter's account of her youth group's experience at the beach was very revealing. I could describe it as bringing to the surface, ugly racism. Something President Trumps excels at....

David Buer, OFM
Elfrida, Arizona

Editor's Note: In Saint Francis' day, only clergy were obligated to be nonviolent. Vatican II broadened that responsibility. Catholic Worker opposition to the corruption of conscience, represented by military training at Catholic schools, stems from our understanding of Jesus' teaching and example. Rather than telling others what to do, we hope to inspire and persuade them to reject killing.

Hi Scott and Claire,
...I found the story of your daughter's beach experience to be both touching, and righteously maddening. Do you have any more copies of that issue that her story was in? I have a few friends that I know would have some very strong feelings about her experience.... Regarding your daughter's not hearing back from anyone, what does it take?

Faith Madzar
Natick, Massachusetts

To Claire and Scott,
...I was unable to view Ken Burns' documentary, *The Vietnam War*. But I understand it was in the main more of the pap necessary for the capitalist mentality to stay thoughtful, sorrowful, shameful enough, but not so much that most citizens can leave a state of comfortable and unconscious cruelty. Richard Cohen said in the September 22 *Arizona Republic*, "The documentary... has been denounced on the left for characterizing the Vietnam War as a fight between the North and the South [commies them vs. good guys us] and not one of anti-colonialism [CIA, drug cartels, DC politics]..."

In the 9/25 *Time* magazine, there's a quote by a late Vietnam veteran to his son, John Meacham, who authors the article, "My Father's Vietnam": "...I remember the brutal heat, the more brutal humidity, the chop-chop-chop of the helicopter blades and the elephant grass that could cut men up like a knife. And remember many things that I have never told you or anyone. These are the demons that I will always bear. South Vietnam... is a place I never really left."

Later in Meacham's article, there's a commentary about Ken Burns' documentary: "In the film, Hal Kushner [a Vietnam vet who was held in captivity five years] tells his story with Ray Charles singing 'America the Beautiful'.. softly in the background. Kushner saw the general, who rescued him, as the embodiment of the old America, the invincible America, the victorious America — an America that didn't really exist anymore..." And sorrowfully never has, built as it was initially on the flesh and blood of Native Americans, the Afro Americans. And with more sorrow, "beautiful" translated for me into "horrible."...

Joan Thomas
Phoenix, Arizona

To the Editors,
When I read Jerry Lembcke's review of Burns and Novick's recent film, I found myself wondering if we had watched the same film. I didn't see every episode but most nights found myself glued to PBS. The concluding episode was so profoundly moving that I wrote an op-ed piece on peace for the local paper here in Vermont. Recovering from the obvious debacle and disaster that was this tragic war, we could avoid future tragedies, like preventing Trump's eager war with North Korea.

Overall, the film's intention and result seem to be the reconciliation of the nation after fifty years of denial and pain. I know I felt reconciliation within myself and I can't imagine how any watcher could not feel that. Burns and Novick's proactive attention to the suffering of the Vietnamese people was as obvious as their coverage of the diminution of spirit of the US military and the growth of the protest movement at home. Their attention to North Vietnamese and Vietcong passion for justice was indeed

"balanced" by showing the outrageous corruption of the puppet governors of the South Vietnamese regime propped up by horrendous US hypocrisy. Interviews with North Vietnamese veterans were as moving as interviews with veterans from the South and with surviving US vets.

Lembcke's review also ignores the film's expose of McNamara's early understanding that the war was unwinnable and his criminal support for it even as he knew the cost in lives and land. The imperialist "us and them" domino theory of Johnson, Nixon, Kissinger, *et al* was fully exposed by the film. How can Lembcke say that the film "gives us a throwback to the days when fighting the Communist bogeyman justified... US intervention"? The film clearly shows the tragedy of that shallow orientation to the Vietnam conflict we so egregiously interfered with for all those years.

On a faith-based note, I didn't understand Lembcke's contempt for Nancy Biberman's repentance about her treatment, as an activist, of returning vets. He seems to want to believe that the country didn't disrespect returning vets. The country did. It's not a myth. Does Lembcke only approve of vets who refused to go? Cultural forces meant some would go, some would refuse. They're all people in need of reconciliation, and the film invites that.

David Brinkley's stirring witness in Arlington Cemetery in the concluding episode summarized, for me, one of many contributions this imperfect film makes: "Maybe we should come here and reflect before we think about entering any other future war." Bush One and Bush Two both ignored Brinkley's editorial. Trump is poised to ignore it now as well. With this film, and with all activists globally who see, together, the need to continue to confront Western Imperialism, we are inspired to make a new push for peace with justice.

Rev. Michael Caldwell
Wolcott, Vermont

Editor's Note: Since, Jerry Lembcke is a Vietnam vetean and a published author on the war, we reached out to him to reply to Michael Caldwell's letter. Prior to publication, we sent Jerry's response to Michael, which he appreciated.

To the Editors,
It is a credit to Burns and Novick that they have restarted discussion about the war in Vietnam. And good for Michael Caldwell for engaging that debate, and to *The Catholic Radical* for opening its pages for that purpose.

Michael applauds Burns and Novick's "exposé" that Robert McNamara knew early-on that the war was unwinnable: but there is no exposé. Everything in the film pertaining to government cover-up has been known since the Pentagon Papers release in 1971 and restated by McNamara in his 1996 book.

Michael misrepresents my rejection of Nancy Biberman's claim to have called Vietnam veterans "baby killers." I have no contempt for her. But reading in the September 29, 2017 article of poet-veteran W.D. Earhart (in the film) from the *New Hampshire Gazette*, that he told Burns and Novick that no one was spat on or called baby killer—and having found nothing in my own search for evidence that it did happen—it's hard to withhold contempt for them.

Burns and Novick begin Episode #1 with Karl Marlantes' claim that coming home from Vietnam was nearly as traumatic as the war itself, and begin Episode #9 with Marlantes being driven away from his airport arrival with snarling protesters assaulting the car—visuals, of course, assembled by the filmmakers to dramatize his words. We know the technique: tell the readers/viewers what they are going to see and, at the end, tell them what they have seen.

Make no mistake. This film uses Vietnam veterans, not so much as eyewitnesses to a war that we don't know about—as they were, of course, during the war years—but as props for rewriting the lost-war story into a coming-home-to-the-war-at-home narrative, the story that the real war was the one lost at Columbia, in Ann Arbor, Madison, and Berkeley.

But the bulk of the film's 18 hours is battle after battle, some of which supports a war-is-hell narrative. But war-is-hell has failed as an antiwar slogan a long time ago; especially when, here, we see troops —all 18-20 years old, the film has us believe, in yet another of the many myths, clichés, and tropes strung together in this film— loading into those choppers with CCR's "Bad Moon Rising" thumping with the whump, whump, whump of the rotor blades. This was the rock-and-roll, lock-and-load war, wasn't it?

The film ends with strains of the Beatle's "Let it Be" wafting across Arlington Cemetery. Let it be? I don't think so. I prefer Michael's own entreaty that we "continue to confront Western Imperialism . . . and make a new push for peace with justice."

Jerry Lembcke
Worcester, Massachusetts

Catholic Worker Calendar

December 6 — Travels in Cuba: Holy Cross sociology professor Selina Gallo-Cruz shares stories from her October trip. 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street.

December 13, Jauary 10 — Evening Prayer: Join us for prayer and Taize chant at 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street.

December 9 & January 13 — Vigil to Reverse the Gun Culture: Join us at The Gun Parlor shooting range from 12:30-1:30 P.M., 170 Prescott Street, Worcester.

December 17 — Christmas Caroling: Join us as we bring good cheer to a nursing home and our neighbors. Meet at 52 Mason Street at 5 P.M. Followed by Christmas cookies and mulled cider.

Mason Street Musings

After seeing a suitcase in our front hallway, I asked Claire where it came from. In exasperation, she told me that a woman, who wanted to join our community, had just appeared at the door from New Orleans. Our week had already been marked by numerous late-night incidents with another guest in crisis. All our beds were full, Claire was in the middle of trying to make dinner, and her patience had worn very thin. She was incredulous that the woman from the Big Easy had not contacted us in advance. After calling our son Aiden to see if he could stay with a friend for a few days, I went upstairs to tidy his room and change his linen to host the sudden arrival. I found her contentedly knitting in our upstairs kitchen. After introducing myself, I asked her what inspired her to come to a Catholic Worker house so far away. She replied, "I've seen your newsletter and was very moved by Claire's writing." Yikes!

But lest you think Claire's the only one around here who fails the holiness test, I have a confession to make. After I told Claire that the newly painted wainscotting in our kitchen reminded me of my grandmother's house, she decided it should be repainted a lighter color. I volunteered to do the job. Before she went out for the morning, she said, "Be sure you prime it." I objected, "That's not necessary," but she insisted, and I agreed. Nonetheless, as soon as she was out the door, I began applying finish paint only to discover that it didn't cover very well. So I painted a second coat. It still looked streaky, and I dreaded Claire chiding me for not priming it, so I painted a third coat which looked fine, but because the full bucket of primer would convict me of not following instruction, I poured it down the toilet, only to discover that I had actually poured out the finish paint for the trim. In desperation, I flushed the real primer, grabbed the empty bucket of trim paint, and ran to the paint store where I had more trim paint put into the old can. As I huffed and puffed home, I was startled to see Claire pulling up in front of our house. My first instinct was to toss the paint can into some bushes, but she saw me before I could do so. To my surprise, she said calmly and without suspicion, "Oh, did you need more paint?" The kicker was that later on, she told me, "When I saw you running with that can of paint, I thought, 'What a holy person Scott is.'"

I wish I could say that Claire and I could be relied on to be exemplary Christians, but, truth be told, we miss the mark quite a bit. Thankfully, there aren't many days when we are both tearing our hair out at the same time. And yet, Luke's Gospel calls us to be perfect, to love the enemy, to welcome the stranger, not to scowl and say "Scram!" or to weave a tangled web to shield our pride.

Such human holiness would seem impossible were it not for the marvel of children. The euphoria of the high school cross country runners I coach and of our grandchildren on Halloween is palpable. They are so filled with hope and promise. And lest, we slip into the cynical belief that youthful optimism is illusory, we all know some seniors equally adept at love. No one is perfect, but we come pretty close at times, and those moments should be treasured.

What is most perfect to me, though, is the image of God incarnate lying in a manager. That's a God Whose vulnerable love inspires. That's a God to Whom I can admit that I dumped paint down the toilet. That's a God Who changes the world with poetry, music, and art. That's a God Whose worth inflates our own. By becoming one of us, that God raises us from the dust and makes us angels.

May we all be most joyful angels this Christmas and beyond! Ω **Scott**

SS. Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker
52 Mason Street
Worcester, MA 01610
(508) 753-3588 & (508) 753-3089

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WORCESTER, MA
PERMIT NO. 271